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XXXV

THE TALENSE (*continued*)

Property and Inheritance. Particular Significance of Certain Relationship Terms. Rites de Passage. Shrines. Soothsayers

428 PROPERTY *and Inheritance:* The rules already given in Chapter XXII for the devolution of private, family, and ancestral property apply equally here. I noted, however, in many cases, deliberate attempts to mislead the enquirer, being repeatedly told that the son succeeds to his father's property to the exclusion of the brother. In every case where such a statement was made it was found that the wish was father of the thought, and that in no case was such succession in conformity with Native customary law. In one of the histories recorded in the previous chapter it will be noted that a son succeeded his father, but this was only due to the coincidence that when *Misore* was driven away from Mampruse he was not accompanied by any of his brothers. The real facts are, that, where there are no brothers, the eldest 'son,' not necessarily of the deceased—he may be son of deceased's brother—succeeds.

582 *Particular Significance of Certain Relationship Terms*: No new facts were disclosed which have not already been discussed, save in connexion with the marriage avoidances relating to cross-cousins.[1] With regard to these, the following, perhaps ingenious rather than convincing, excuse was given for the prevalent dislike for such unions.

582 586 'If you married your mother's brother's daughter, and quarrelled about the cows paid to your *abεn* or *asεn* (maternal uncle, Nankane *asiba*) for *sull*, (Nankane, *sulle*), this would lead to trouble. Suppose you quarrelled with your wife after marriage and she returned to her father, who is your maternal uncle, you would ask him to return the cows. Should he not do so, you would be entitled to seize cows belonging to any person from his, that is from your own mother's, town; you would descend into the valley (*sig boog nwoy nigi*; Nankane, *sig boo nyoge*). After doing so you could no longer perform sacrifices to your mother or to her mother; you would not sleep; your children would die, and your uncle would also suffer.'

Marriage with Father's Sister's Daughter: A somewhat similar explanation was given for this avoidance. 'You cannot marry her because

[1] See p. 4.

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of the cows. If she went back home you would claim the cows back from her father, who is your own "father," and this would interfere with the sacrifices to your father and father's father.'

Marriage Customs: These appear to be almost identical with those of the Nankanse, as will be seen from the following: The suitor approaches the father of the girl, who refers him to his eldest brother, or father, if alive. The suitor brings tobacco to the girl's father and mother; they show these gifts to the head of the compound. Three or four days later the suitor will bring a dead guinea-fowl and give it to his future mother-in-law. This gift is called *pɔ-bore-bono* (something with which to seek a wife). Later, the suitor will send a live fowl and guinea-fowl and corn by a messenger known as *aben* (*isiga* in Nankane). These offerings will be given to the girl's *seyr* (guardian spirit) by the head of her house, who will say: 'Receive these things; the girl has reached puberty; she is ready to go to her husband; the day they bore her, they gave her to you.' The girl now goes to the bridegroom's town, to the compound of the *aben* (who is a son of a woman who came from the bride's town). There she remains three days, after which she goes to her husband. Sometimes the cows have to be paid before the girl leaves her father's compound; they are then known as *lay bo* (*leka* in Nankane). Sometimes they are paid long after marriage and are then called *sull' bono*. After the bride has gone to her husband's compound, her brothers will go there, and her husband will kill a dog for them, and a fowl and some goats. After they have returned home, the bridegroom will send the *aben* with a live cock to the section-head who is 'half-brother' to the head of the section to which the bride belongs, and also a dead guinea-fowl to the bride's mother. These gifts are called *sandan* (compare Nankane *sandono*). Without this formality the marriage is not legal, however many cows are paid, nor may the husband claim adultery damages. This gift is to obtain a witness. If the woman later leaves her husband, the same *aben* will claim back the cows.

Funeral Customs: The following account of a Talense funeral was given me by the *Ten'dan*' of Tɔngo:

'When a man dies I have to make the grave.' (This is not to be taken literally; he will be represented by a brother or son.) 'I go to the spot with ashes in a red pot and mark out the grave in a circle. I then dig a little and hand the axe (*lebo*) to the *bayas* (sextons) and they continue to dig the grave (*yeog'*). I then begin to sacrifice. The *kunran* (the person in charge of the funeral custom) gives me a fowl (not a

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Kusase

606 will lose his wife; they can take her from him and return him the cows.'

607 *Privileged Familiarity*: 'A man may play and be familiar with his
603 sister's husband. A man can also be familiar with his grandparents,
648 for when a man has grand-children who drag him about, he blesses the Sky-God.[1] We, Kusase, also "play together" (*deem taba*) with the Mampruse and the Gurense, because these tribes intermarry with us, and we have never sold each other, but the Moshi we never play with, for we used to sell them for food. The Gambaga and Bawku people, however, play with the Moshi, saying when they meet one, "Where do you come from, you worthless thing; I have heard that the Chief of your town is dead?" The Moshi will reply, "You fellow with the filed teeth, get out of my way; be off with you", and he will rush right into a man's compound as if it belonged to him.

'A man's mother's brother's daughter's husband (*daki*) may beat
607 him in fun. A man can swear at his wife's brothers (*ti tu tab*); we curse each other.'

582 *Marriages Prohibited and Allowed*: 'Kusase do not marry Moshi women; they eat fowls, when they ought to eat guinea-fowls.' As long as your own wife is alive, you must not marry your wife's sister's
[587] daughter. You may marry your wife's sister while your wife is still alive, but not a *nyere*[2] sister. A son may not marry a father's widow, because a son sacrifices to his father's spirit.[3]

764 *Kusase Funeral Customs*: The Kusase do not bury even a *Yi-dan* (head of a compound) in a room or yard of his compound, but outside in the *saman* farm. The head of a compound is, however, given a separate and new grave (*yaog*); this is round with a circular bottle-neck mouth. The soil is not filled in. The mouth of the grave is covered with a pot and plastered over with earth (see Fig. 88).

Graves are not communal, at most two persons being buried in one grave. The second person so buried may not be,

(*a*) Junior to the first.
(*b*) *Nyere* to him or her.
(*c*) Any wife, save the last surviving.
(*d*) Two children may not be buried in the same grave 'because they would quarrel'.

A male is buried in a goat skin; a female buried naked, save for a

[1] A grandchild may not look into a grandparent's ears or he or she will become deaf.
[2] See p. 8. [3] But see p. 508.

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throughout its past; and it is, at the same time, the embryo of its future organization. A Tale lineage cannot be dissociated from its temporal extension.

A maximal lineage is fixed with reference to its founding ancestor, who is the focus of its unity and the symbol of its corporate identity. From time to time its unity and identity become explicit in the common cult of this ancestor and in the regulation of intra-lineage relations which hinges on it. The ancestor cult is the calculus of the lineage system, the mechanism by means of which the progressive internal differentiation of a lineage is ordered and is fitted into the existing structure. It is also the principal ideological bulwark of the lineage organization.

Every maximal lineage is continually expanding and proliferating through the fission of its minor segments. But though its span is thus constantly increasing, its form does not alter. It has a fixed centre and a fixed locus we might say. In theory it always remains the same lineage, and new maximal lineages cannot arise through the splitting up of an existing maximal lineage. It is a unit of common agnatic descent, and no branch of it can ever repudiate this. In theory ties of descent can never lapse. A maximal lineage is also an exogamous unit, and no branch of it can contract out of this bond.

To the contemporary observer the Tale lineage system appears as a stable and finally established factor of the constituted social structure, the ground plan of which was laid down in the distant past by processes which are still going on. In any maximal lineage, therefore, the fission of minor segments does not alter the equilibrium of the major segments at any given time. Changes in minimal lineages, in fact, cannot alter the equilibrium of any segment greater than the minimal. This is reflected in the naming of lineages and their segments. Every lineage is named after its founder, and as long as a lineage persists it bears the same name. Thus the names of segments greater than the minimal may be regarded as fixed once for all. A lineage is called the 'children (*biis*) of so-and-so' or 'the house (*yir*) or people of the house (*yidɛm*) of so-and-so'. These ways of denoting a lineage are interchangeable. A lineage may also be described as a 'room' (*dug*) of a superordinate lineage. This indicates that it is being thought of as a segment of the latter.

This formal analysis will be more easily understood from the diagram which follows. It shows, in a simplified way, the structure of a major segment of a maximal lineage which is assumed to have only two major segments. The major segment not included must be homologous with the major segment shown here since a lineage necessarily divides into segments of equal order. Similarly, the relations of the two major segments of our hypothetical maximal lineage to each other are repeated, at a lower order of segmentation, in the relations of the major segments of each major segment to one another. In the diagram the relations of subsegments X and Y to each other, within the framework of Major Segment I, are identical in form with those of Major Segment I and its brother (*sunzɔ*) segment, Major Segment II, and this rule holds for every subsequent order of segmentation. We shall later on study the interests, rights, and obligations associated with such an ordered series

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This summary statement follows closely the formulations of the Tallensi themselves. They normally think of a lineage, a set of lineages, or a community, as a unit in relation to other units of a like sort, irrespective of its internal differentiation. Thus, Tongo people say: '*Tam ni Yamələgdɛm ni Siedɛm ni Biukdɛm a la yaab yɛni biis*—We and the people of Yamələg, and the people of Sie and the people of Biuk are the children of one ancestor.' The place-name serves to designate the social group. Once, at Sie, some young men from Tongo, members of an assimilated lineage, called on me. 'We've only come on a visit', they said, '*daya ti mobiis n a Siedɛm*?—Are not these people of Sie our kinsfolk?'

Such intercourse is constant amongst the three Talni-speaking branches of Mosuor's posterity (*tu'u*). Biuk, both because of its fusion with the Gəris and its geographical location, is somewhat isolated from regular contact with its Talni-speaking clansmen. But the ties which control this voluntary fraternization emerge more precisely in a number of critical norms and institutions.

The Critical Norms of Clanship

Most important of these is the rule of exogamy. Marriage is unconditionally prohibited between the four branches of Mosuor's posterity—i.e. between members of the authentic lineages of Tongo, Yamələg, Sie, and Biuk. The prohibition extends to the assimilated lineages as well, but not to all attached lineages, though the natives state it as if it applied to the entire sub-clan. They regard it as the inevitable corollary of their common ancestry. It is, therefore, the widest extension of the rule which prohibits marriage within the agnatic lineage. I discovered only one instance of the transgression of this rule at Tongo, and this occurred in abnormal circumstances.

A second critical norm always cited is: '*ti diit taaba pakoya*—We marry one another's widows.' A Tongo man has the right to seek the hand of the widow of a Yamələg, a Sie, or a Biuk man; but in actual practice remarriage of widows is restricted by so many other conditions that this leviratic right is mainly significant as an ideological index of clanship. It is the correlative of the rule of exogamy and, like it, the widest extension of a right which holds primarily within the lineage. Occasionally this right is exercised in its widest sense. The Chief of Tongo, for example, has availed himself of it to solve the problem of accommodation for himself and his retinue when he is compelled to visit the Administrative Headquarters at Zuarungu. An elderly widow at Biuk is nominally his wife and he may therefore stay in her house without embarrassment. In another case a middle-aged Yamələg widow elected to marry a stalwart young man from Tongo in preference to any of her dead husband's closer kinsmen. It is extremely unlikely that either woman would have been permitted to marry so distant an agnate of her dead husband if she were still capable of child-bearing. Nevertheless, it is an essential consequence of the leviratic right that if a man from one of the sub-clans should succeed in marrying a young widow of a member of another, no reprisals could be publicly undertaken against him, whereas anyone outside the range of clanship would be courting armed vengeance by such an act.

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lineage is also a region where different fields of clanship overlap. This is what gives it its intercalary functions (see Diagram on p. 86). 618x

Quasi-Clanship: Joking Partnership

Beyond the lineage's field of clanship lies a zone of social relations with which it has no constituted ties. For example, Zubiuŋ has no constituted ties with Zandoya. When Pal of Zubiuŋ abducted the young wife of a Zandoya man, this was his justification for an act which would have been considered an outrage if she had been the wife of a Ba'ari man. Again, when Sayabo of Kpata'ar clandestinely brought home the wife of a Gorogo man, the elders of his lineage were ready to shield him. A few months later another youth of the same lineage eloped with the wife of a man belonging to a linked lineage, and the same elders peremptorily sent her home to her former husband.

Somewhere between clanship and potential enmity come two other kinds of ties belonging to the same class of structural relations as clanship and generally accounted for as arising out of some form of kinship (*mabiirət*). Each clan among the Talis, and in some cases a particular maximal lineage, has one or more joking partnerships with other clans or lineages. Thus Ba'ari has a joking partnership with Gorogo, Zubiuŋ with Sakpee and Gundaat, Kpata'ar with Wakii, Degal with Samiit, and so forth. The natives describe these relationships in the following terms. They say, 'We tease one another (*ti kiehət ni taaba*)', or 'We abuse one another (*ti turɛ taaba*)'. If they are asked for an explanation they say, 'It is laughter (*la'at*)', 'it is brother-in-lawship (*dakiirət*)'. Talking of it always raises a grin. 618x 602

The joking partnership has two conventional modes of expression. When, for example, a Ba'ari man meets a Gorogo man or woman on a path by chance they abuse each other with impunity, in such terms as 'you ugly thing (*bonlɔrɔga*)', or 'you good for nothing (*boŋwari*)', or some similar objurgation. Spoken in anger, these are deadly insults. Between joking partners, who shout them out with mock seriousness, they arouse only a roar of laughter. As we have noted, the natives compare them with the joking relationship of affines of the same generation. A man will tease his wife's brother (*dakii*) or sister (*dakii-pɔk*) or his sister's husband (*dakii*) or a clansman's wife in this way, and a woman her brother's wife (*pɔŋakii*) or her husband's sister (*pɔŋakii*), to the amusement of both.[1]

The other gesture of privileged aggression which is a convention of the joking partnership I once observed at a Zubiuŋ funeral. A cow had been slaughtered in honour of the deceased, and the elders were distributing the meat. A huge crowd of people had gathered, as is usual, for the occasion, and the tumult was indescribable. The division of the meat was still in progress. This process is always accompanied by loud and what appears to be truculent argument. Suddenly a youth sprang forward from the middle of the crowd, snatched the leg of a sheep, and sprinted off at top speed. There was a moment's consternation, and then an uproar. Laughing and shouting taunts and mockery at the top of their voices, the crowd looked on as one of the most respected elders of Zubiuŋ dashed off 618x 764 602

[1] But marriage is not prohibited between joking partners.

[582]

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to declare, is not a matter of expediency or calculation but the essence of life for the individual and the community. It is a sacred necessity; and men must be in harmony amongst themselves and with the mystical powers that control their lives if they desire to gain the beneficence of these powers for this end. The ritual, the sacrifices, and the prayers to the ancestors and to the Earth, pleading for the fruitfulness of the land, of women, and of the flocks and herds, for health, prosperity, and peace, and offering thanks at the end of the agricultural year for these boons, eloquently express the Tale conception of the common good. In the rites of the Great Festivals the widest community that has social relevance for any Talaŋ emerges, not as a hard-and-fast political unit, but as a temporary synthesis of all the forces of social integration operative in Tale society. This is an expression of the fact that, though they have no centralized government, the Tallensi do form a single body politic, albeit one without defined territorial boundaries. This unit is built up on the widely ramifying structural ties which knit the independent corporate units together. But its ultimate basis is a body of moral and jural norms and values accepted as binding by all Tallensi, and defended from the disruptive action of conflicting sectional interests by the most solemn ritual sanctions of Tale religion. The function of ritual collaboration between clans and lineages is to maintain the unchallengeable validity of these norms and values; for upon their observance the attainment of the common good ultimately depends.[1]

Native Thought and the Realities of Social Structure

We have digressed to survey the scope and function of ritual collaboration among the Talis in order to see what truth there is in the maxim that 'those who sacrifice together do not intermarry'. As a generalization it is obviously inaccurate; but it is valid for particular instances of linkage by clanship ties, though only as an *a posteriori* inference.

Tale elders do not fall into this error of deduction through lack of intelligence or ignorance of their social organization. Among the Tallensi, as among most primitive peoples, what appears to us to be defective logic usually proves to be a product of the social organization as it is apprehended by native thought. When an individual Talaŋ applies the maxim we have criticized to his own particular field of social relations—not to that of his lineage or clan—it is perfectly apposite. For an individual in his personal capacity can only sacrifice together with other individuals if they are his kinsfolk or clansfolk; and this implies automatically that he cannot marry their daughters or sisters.

In the social philosophy of the Tallensi, as will be shown in the next volume of this study, kinship is the model of all social ties between individuals and groups. The ties of clanship, ritual collaboration, or local contiguity are visualized as so many different extensions and transformations of the fundamental patterns of kinship. For the individual this is accurate to a very large extent. There is a kinship element in all his social

[1] This aspect of Tale political organization and its wider sociological implications are discussed in *African Political Systems*, cit. supra.

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for example, avoid the squirrel (*sinsɛrəg*); the Tamboog people do not eat the dog (*baa*), the leopard (*yeogbaa*), the monkey (*ŋmaaŋ*), and the hare (*suoŋ*).

The majority of the clans which observe the two characteristic avoidances of the Talis have additional discriminatory totems. Zubiuŋ has the cat (*sakoo*); at Wakii it is the snake (*waaf*), and this includes all species of snake, even the innocent little green *bɛnɔrəg* which children of other clans kill and eat. A whole group of clans, including all that part of the network of linked lineages that connects Bunkiuk, Yinduur, Sii, and Gorogo, taboo the snake and the crocodile (*baŋ*) in addition to the land and water tortoises. Among these clans a snake that injures a domestic animal or a person is killed without hesitation, and if it is of an edible species, such as the python (*wayakpɛm*), it will be given to a friend or kinsman of a neighbouring clan which does not taboo snakes. This rule applies to all species of dangerous animals that serve as totems to a clan. If they injure mankind, or man's property, they are transgressing (*galəm*) and deserve to be killed. This does not mean, however, that the Tallensi conceive of a special tie of friendship or kinship between a clan and its totem animals. But we shall come back to this point later.

Ba'ari and Yayazuor, with the exception of one accessory lineage, do not fall into the same circle of totemic avoidances. Their taboos vary from one maximal lineage to another. Thus, Ba'at-Sakpar taboos the dog and the hare; but Lakum yiri has no totemic avoidances.

When a clan or lineage has several totemic avoidances they are all considered to be of equal importance. In some situations the totems common to several clans are stressed, in others the natives draw attention to those which differentiate units among a number that have some common totems. There is no precise correlation between the ties of clanship and the distribution of totemic avoidances. Tamboog and Gundaat, closely allied as they are by ties of clanship, have different totemic avoidances. The constituent maximal lineages of clans like Soog and Ba'ari have no common totems, nor have the linked lineages of Zubiuŋ and Ba'ari, or Soog and Sakpee. Conversely, common totemic avoidances do not by themselves indicate the existence of clanship ties. Ba'at-Sakpar has no clanship ties with Tamboog, though both taboo the dog and the hare, and the avoidance of the Degal people is found also among some clans of the Sie area which have no ties of clanship with Degal. It follows from this that (as among the Namoos) common totemic prohibitions are not a bar to marriage; lineage and clan exogamy operate in terms of clanship ties only.

On the other hand, clanship ties are in some instances associated with totemic avoidances. Dun biis of Ba'ari are said to observe the same avoidances as the Hill Talis, because they have clanship ties with Samiit. Alea biis of Dkoog have the totemic taboos of Wakii, as well as those of Dkoog proper (a Namoo clan), because of their clanship ties with Wakii. Both these are attached lineages, whose descent is attributed to a son of a clan sister who had been married to a Samiit and a Wakii man respectively and had subsequently been divorced and sent back home with her children. The two lineages thus preserve the avoidances of what would

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776 is to pay over the gifts and sacrifices he has promised the *Bɔɣar* in return.
788 Later, when the child is old enough to travel, it is brought to the *Bɔɣar* to be ritually dedicated to it and named, and thus brought into com-
[551] munion with it. Wards of the *Bɔɣar* have prescribed names according to their order of birth. First-borns are always Tɔŋ or Bɔɣare; later children have names compounded of these two names and suffixes indicative of
●[582] sex or birth order—Tɔndoog or Tɔnpɔk or Tanzoo, and so forth. A girl ward must remain chaste until she marries; and when she is given in marriage she has to be released from this bond by means of gifts and sacrifices to the *Bɔɣar* before she goes to her husband.

769 The ritual dominion of the Hill Talis' External *Bɔɣa* extends, also, to
648 whole clans and lineages of non-Tale tribes as we shall see later. Here
574 it is enough to mention that every External *Bɔɣar* of the Hill Talis has a traditional network of client lineages and clans among the adjacent non-Tale tribes, the Mamprusi, Dagomba, Bulisi, Woolisi, and even Mossi; and nowadays also in Ashanti and the Colony. Every year, at the time of the Harvest Festivals, these client lineages send messengers with gifts and sacrifices to the *Bɔɣar* to which they adhere, to give thanks for the benefits of the past year and to pray for good crops, good health, peace, and offspring during the coming year. Client lineages also observe the totemic and other ritual rules of the *Bɔɣar*. From time to time reciprocal visits are paid to the client lineages by representatives of the Hill Talis
[609] lineages that sponsor them before the *Bɔɣar*. These visitors, coming as emissaries of the *Bɔɣar*, are received with the hospitality due to honoured kinsmen and travel long distances in hostile country under the safe conduct of their client associates without danger. It is chiefly from its client lineages that pilgrims come to a particular *Bɔɣar*.

784 The personal totemic avoidances of wards of a Talis *Bɔɣar* are instances
776 of a more general rule. It often happens that a child's spirit-guardian is a
184 matrilateral ancestor or ancestress, its father's maternal grandfather, for instance. Then the ward (*sɛɣɔraan*) is obliged to observe the totemic avoidances which were held by his spirit-guardian during the latter's lifetime. He must do so, according to native doctrine, because he will have to offer sacrifices throughout his lifetime to his spirit-guardian; and as a sacrifice is an act of communion, both between the living, and between the living and the dead, he would be unable either to offer or to partake of sacrifices to his spirit-guardian if he did not keep the latter's taboos. Thus he would nullify the bond of mystical tutelage and lay himself open to inevitable disasters. He would also gravely damage his relations with the agnatic descendants of his spirit-guardian, upon whom falls the duty of maintaining the cult of the latter's spirit and whom he will sometimes have to join in sacrifice. There are many people among the Namoos who observe Talis taboos for this reason, and many Talis who avoid both the totems of their own clan and those of other clans as well. The fowl taboo of the Namoos is an exception to this rule, for the obvious reason that it is restricted to first-born children. Even if a man had to avoid the fowl in his lifetime, it ceases to be relevant after his death, and is no longer remembered by his descendants. But the rule does apply to the ancillary totems of those Namoo clans and lineages that have any, such as the

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571 of closer common interests. It is related to the *yizug* as the *yizug* is to the
613 clan. At the limit it marks off the widest lineage within which there is a strong feeling of moral solidarity, a tendency for corporate unity to prevail in all circumstances, and a strong sense of undivided common interests. Beyond this range, in the zone of section relations and in that of clanship, corporate unity and solidarity tend to be a function of politico-ritual interdependence and of a balance between the competitive interests and the obligatory bonds of reciprocity of the major segments of the clan.

582 At Tongo the widest range of the *dug* in this definitive sense is a lineage
613 segment of the order of Lebhtiis yidem. This is constantly shown in economic life, as when a man invites his neighbours to a collective hoeing party or to help him build a new house. Then all the members of his widest *dug* feel bound to turn out, but not members of other *dugɔt* of the same section. Members of other sections will not be asked to come at all, and if one or two turn out it will be because they have personal ties of matrilateral kinship with the man issuing the invitation. It appears similarly in all other concerns of the individual which require corporate support. It is shown in the incidence of marriage prohibitions. Tallensi may not, according to strict rule, marry cognatic kin of any degree whatsoever. A man may not marry a daughter of his maternal uncle's lineage (*ahɔb yiri*). But the restriction is limited to his mother's widest paternal *dug*. Thus a man whose mother belongs to Lebhtiis yidem of Tɔŋ-Puhug would not be allowed to marry another daughter of this *dug*, but he can—and innumerable cases show that this often happens—marry a daughter of another *dug* of Puhug.

613 Dissension occurs between segments of such a *dug* now and then, but
[578] this arouses severe reprobation. Members of the *dug* feel it as a direct threat to their well-being, in a way that they do not feel conflict between such *dugɔt* to be; they feel it as verging on the sinful, challenging the wrath of the ancestor spirits, whereas conflict between such *dugɔt* or between sections, though morally reprehensible, is not mystically dangerous. Within this *dug* sexual relations between a member and the wife of
[835] one of his agnates are branded as incest, and produce a serious if not
[837] irreparable rupture in the unit; and sexual relations between classificatory brother and sister meet with strong censure. Beyond this range sexual relations between a man and the wife of a clansman are merely adulterous, a violation of clan solidarity, not a sin; and intercourse with a clan sister is not censured. These distinctions go back to one fundamental principle. The wide *dug* marks the widest range within which differences of generation and birth order are recognized for jural and ritual purposes; beyond that range these differences are not recognized. The lower limit of the *dug* corresponds to a segment of about the order of Dɔohraan yidem. This narrow *dug* frequently forms the core of an expanded family; it determines the widest field within which domestic relations prevail. Its members have differentiated person-to-person relations, based on the recognition of generation differences and proxy-parenthood, as well as corporate lineage relations. Their moral bonds are correspondingly stronger than in the wide *dug*, though of the same kind. Within this unit sexual intercourse with a sister arouses very strong reprobation, and

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of another medial or maximal lineage of his own or a closely allied clan, hostility between the two units is aroused and their normal relations are thrown out of gear. But usually steps are very quickly taken to set matters right. Either the head of the wronged lineage sends to protest to the head of the seducer's lineage, and the latter, backed by the lineage elders, makes the seducer confess and agree to apologize, or else the culprit himself, aware that public opinion would reprove his action, begs the head of his nuclear lineage to get the head of their medial or maximal lineage to intercede on his behalf with the head of the wronged lineage. It is at the homestead of the latter that the rites of reconciliation are performed by representatives of the two lineages. This is typical of inter-lineage jural relations.

A woman who commits adultery exposes her husband and children to mystical dangers. Among Namoos she is haled to the homestead of the head of her husband's medial lineage and subjected to the ordeal of entering the gateway (*zaŋɔr*). If she confesses she may enter safely. If not, the lineage ancestors will cause her to get ill if she enters the gateway. This is a very powerful sanction of marital fidelity among women and is one reason why adultery is not very common. Tallensi sum up the role of the lineage head in the sentence, 'All our (lineage) affairs are conducted at the gateway of our lineage head's homestead (i.e. the lineage *zaŋɔr*—cf. p. 208) (*Ti yela kama maana ti kpeem yir zaŋɔne*)'.

In the old days the men of a medial lineage all assembled at the *kpeem's* homestead before going out to fight. There they all took part in sacrifices to the ancestors and 'ate (*di*)' protective medicine to fortify themselves against the enemy's arrows. Nowadays they do the same before setting out on a communal hunting expedition, for there are many dangers to be faced—accidental arrow wounds, fire, and wild beasts. This is the service for which the *kpeem* is rewarded when he is given a hind leg of every animal slain by the sons of the lineage.

The *kpeem's* functions are most conspicuous in relation to the wives and children of the lineage, for they stand for the greatest common interest of the lineages. It is the reproductive powers of the wives and the existence of children that secure the perpetuation of the lineage and the immortality of the ancestors. The handling of a woman who commits adultery illustrates this. Similarly the lineage elders must be informed of, and the lineage head give his formal consent to, the re-marriage of a widow of any member of the lineage. A widow is in theory entitled to reject a husband chosen for her by her late husband's nuclear lineage and to choose any member of his clan of the right generation. If she does this she must get the consent of the head of his medial lineage and this is binding on the whole medial lineage. Her late husband's nuclear lineage cannot then object to her marrying out of that lineage.

The head of a medial or maximal lineage comes into the formalities of marriage for every member, man or woman, of the lineage, in his capacity as its chief representative in interlineage jural relations. The right to dispose of a girl in marriage is vested in her guardian the head of her nuclear lineage. It is he who receives and owns the bride-

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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613 price;[1] and conversely, it is he who is directly responsible for the payment
582 of bride-price for the wives of members of the nuclear lineage, and for any other outlay entailed by the marriage formalities. But for all these transactions the formal consent (which is in fact never withheld) of the medial lineage head is required. This has the force of a blessing. When
613 the bridegroom's people send the placation gifts (*lu szndaan*) by which the
583 marriage is regularized, the messenger goes first to the head of the girl's medial or maximal lineage, and gives him a live cock, the most important item among the placation gifts.[2] By accepting the live cock the lineage head signifies the acquiescence of the whole lineage in the marriage and the blessing of the ancestors thereon. Whether or not bride-price is paid, the girl is thereafter the jurally recognized wife of the bridegroom. As a rule it is perfectly safe for the lineage head to accept the cock, as placation gifts are only sent when the head of the girl's nuclear lineage consents. But cases do occur in which they are sent without the knowledge of the latter as a dodge by which to compel him to acquiesce in the marriage. Then if the head of the medial lineage accepts the live cock, the head of the girl's nuclear lineage must perforce acquiesce. This makes the marriage binding but does not secure it against dissolution through action taken by the head of the girl's nuclear lineage.

In the same way, when a woman's father's people come to demand the payment of bride-price from her husband's nuclear lineage, they go first to the head of the husband's medial lineage. He conducts the messengers to the head of the husband's nuclear lineage and formally presides over the negotiations.

Marriage transactions illustrate a very important principle of Tale jural relations. They are always relations between lineage units. Even when they appear to involve only particular individuals the lineage framework is implicit in the transaction. But this does not mean that all Tale jural relations are based on the concept of collective responsibility. On the contrary, jural responsibility is precisely fixed on particular individuals or exactly defined corporate units. This is graphically summed up in many Tale maxims. Thus they say 'A pipe sounds best in its owner's mouth (*Yiig m-mah ka daana muoni*)'—that is, an action should be answered for by the person directly responsible for it. What we find, rather, is that all jural relations involve a configuration of rights on one side and a configuration of responsibilities on the other, both corresponding to the range of lineage segments involved. And no jural transaction is complete until the whole configuration of rights and responsibilities, on both sides, is brought into action. Though marriage formalities involve primarily the nuclear lineage and medial lineage, they presuppose the entire framework of maximal lineage and clan relations; and this is the case with most other jural relations among the Tallensi.

[1] Subject to limitations that will be detailed in our next volume.

[2] In many clans there is an arrangement between pairs of medial or maximal lineages that have some special tie of kinship by which the *szndaan* cock for a girl of one lineage is delivered to the *kpeem* of the other lineage and vice versa. E.g. this arrangement obtains between Lebhtiis yidem and Kabuu yidem at Tɔŋ-Puhug and is a sign of their close kinship as lineages sprung from one original progenitrix (see p. 212).

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ritual collaboration in a series of complementary relations the proper maintenance of which they believe to be indispensable for their common welfare. This is the basis of the ritual sanctions against instigating war and shedding blood and of the moral repugnance associated with them. A war temporarily upset the equilibrium of Tale society; it could not destroy it.

The social system of the Tallensi, in its widest extent, is held together by its religious superstructure. Its unity is none the less real because it appears only on the highest plane of common religious values known to the natives. As we have noted, the complementary politico-ritual offices of the chiefship, which is typically a Namoo office, and the tendaanaship, typically an office found amongst non-Namoos, constitute the focus of the institutions that maintain this unity; and the annual cycle of the Great Festivals are at once the chief sanction and the supreme expression of it. The coming of the white man has made very little difference to the way these institutions operate in relation to the fundamental structure of Tale society. They continue to be the crowning mechanism of equilibrium in Tale society, because its segmentary social structure has kept its traditional form and vitality. It is possible, though not demonstrable, that only a strong and universally accepted religious sanction could hold such a society together. In practice the equilibrium is achieved by the distribution of mutually complementary offices among the segments of the society, all of which are essential for the performance of definite ritual duties.

It is a significant index of the type of social system presented by the Tallensi that the widest range of social solidarity found among them is evoked by their Great Festivals. Great stress is laid on the ritually sanctioned truce to all fighting or discord between clans or maximal lineages during the Festivals. That is why marriages are forbidden during the *Gɔlib* Festival. The Festival Cycle begins with the Harvest Festivals. These are celebrated by single clans or groups of linked maximal lineages independently of one another and serve to enhance the sense of clan and lineage solidarity. The climax is the *Gɔlib* Festival, immediately before the rains. This gives ritual sanction and dramatic expression to the idea of the close-knit interdependence of all the Tallensi with one another. Its reiterated themes are the common interests of all the Tallensi—food, peace, and fecundity—which must be achieved if they are to survive, and the supreme common values—the cult of the ancestors and of the Earth—by which the whole of Tale social life is steered. The lesson of *Gɔlib*, to the Tallensi, is that men cannot realize their greatest common interests or pursue their greatest common purposes in mutual enmity. *Gɔlib* is the most powerful counterweight to war and to the tendency of each clan and maximal lineage to set its own corporate interests above the common interest of the whole society. It is noteworthy that the Great Festivals do not presuppose the suspension of the primary loyalties of the segments that make up Tale society. They represent a synthesis, for the time being, of these primary loyalties—a synthesis that is possible only by giving full scope to the feeling of clan and maximal lineage unity and singularity in each group. *Gɔlib* emphasizes the mutual dependence of Namoos and Talis, but it does this by simultaneously enhancing the

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The Generic Concept of Kinship

602 Among the Tallensi the generic concept of kinship, *dɔɣam*, subsumes all kinds and degrees of genealogical relationship, however remote, through one or more progenitors or progenetrices. But its primary reference is to procreation. One might perhaps translate it by the word 'generation' in its etymological sense. Its root, the verb *dɔɣ*—to bear or beget a child—signifies both the male and the female function in procreation. *Dɔɣam*, the abstract noun, describes the process, or the act, or the physiological capacity, of bringing a child into the world, as well as the ties thus created. The logic behind this generalized concept of kinship is plain. Every genealogical relationship goes back, eventually, to one pair of parents. Both in fact and in Tale kinship theory the parent-child bond is the nodal bond of kinship.

Though the Tallensi see every genealogical relationship as a tie of physical consanguinity, this is not the thing that matters most. What matters most is the social relations entailed by consanguinity. A genealogical tie between two people or two genealogically defined units comes into action in the palpable facts of economic life, jural relations, moral values, ceremonial duties, and ritual ideas and performances. Genealogical ties very often have economic or political utility and are sustained by powerful moral and religious sanctions. But behind all this lies a general notion which the natives themselves do not need to formulate but which is implicit in all their kinship behaviour. A great deal of Tale kinship custom is specific. In ceremonial situations different categories of kin often behave in prescribed ways which sharply distinguish them from one another. At a funeral ceremony, for example, one can tell at once, from the kind of gifts they bear and the attitudes they display, whether a party of mourners are relatives-in-law (*deenam*), clansmen (*yidem*), or sisters' children (*ahɔs*), of the bereaved. But in the routine of ordinary life the intercourse of kinsfolk has no such formal precision, and is often indistinguishable from the intercourse of friends, neighbours, or other associates. Not even the native, attuned as he is to the fine nuances of his cultural idiom, could tell whether two women working and chatting amicably together are co-wives, mother and daughter, or mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The general notion we have mentioned corresponds to this indeterminate and elastic manifestation of kinship.

582 The Tallensi indicate it most clearly in connexion with the rules governing a proper marriage. They draw a sharp distinction between 602 *dɔɣam*, kinship, and *deen*, in-lawship. The crux of the rule of clan exogamy and of the collateral prohibition of marriage with consanguineous kin of any degree (and the natives do not distinguish these two classes of restrictions) is the principle that *dɔɣam* and *deen* are irreconcilably contradictory. They must not be 'mixed' (*gyet*).

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606 this son-in-law from his other sons-in-law, both because this young man
611 was the husband of his own daughter, whereas the others were the
602 husbands of his dead brothers' daughters, and because this son-in-law was as devoted to him as his own sons. Tallensi often say that a man's own children are virtually his *saarət*, though not technically so. There is no confusion in the native mind about these usages of the concept of *soog*; they understand and explain clearly that these are metaphorical usages.

835 The feeling of close, personal intimacy in the relationship of uterine kin is best brought out in the native attitude about sexual relations between *saarət*. It is incestuous if the couple know they are *saarət*, however distant their uterine connexion. It is like incest between own brother and sister, and is viewed in the same way as the latter. Tallensi think of it with disgust rather than horror. Sexual desire for a known *soog* relative is so utterly inconsistent with the general attitude of uterine kin towards each other that it is unthinkable in a decent person. It is a taboo (*kihər*) which normal people take for granted. There are no ritual or jural sanctions against incest with a *soog*, and Tallensi would say that there is no need for them. At no point are the relations of uterine kin subject to sanctions; 'I will not refuse him, I will not deny him anything', says the native of a *soog*, thinking of this as an axiomatic feature of *soog* kinship.

582 Marriage between *saarət* is, of course, forbidden, and the elders of
602 the lineages concerned would never allow it if the couple are known to be uterine kin. But sometimes, owing to the devious ramifications of uterine kinship, a married couple discover that they are distant *saarət*.
[586] If there are no children, or the elders of the girl's lineage want a pretext for taking her from her husband, they might insist on the dissolution of the marriage. If a child has been born, or the couple refuse to part for any other reason, their kinship must be ritually severed. The rite is very simple. The essential act consists of the husband and wife grasping a calabash with one hand each and wrenching it in halves. This symbolizes the splitting (*bɔk*) of their kinship.

602 It is not uncommon for a man to have one or more *saarət* (other than his siblings) among the members of his own clan. They may be the sons of one mother by different fathers, or the sons of sisters, or of more distantly related uterine kinswomen who married into the same clan. In such cases one can see how the loyalties based on uterine kinship are distinguished from the ties of lineage membership. Yikpɛmdaan and Tinta'alam of Tɔŋ-Kuorɔg, the two senior elders of Kuorɔg section, are *saarət*, but members of different segments of the section. Tinta'alam's children and brothers' children speak of Yikpɛmdaan as their father (*ba*); Yikpɛmdaan and Tinta'alam speak of each other as brothers, since their mothers were full sisters. Their mutual affection and attachment, going back to the childhood of Yikpɛmdaan, when he lived for a time with Tinta'alam, are well known. Tinta'alam

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602 and Ɔndieso was one of the first to come to the help of his *soog* in his
578 sorrow. The other members of Ɔndieso's segment demonstratively remained away.

602 Other ties of matrilateral kinship also create bonds of personal attachment between members of the same maximal lineage, but none is so effective as that of uterine kinship.

The Dispersion of Uterine Kin

602 The majority of a person's uterine kin are, however, dispersed among other clans than his own. This is a natural result of the rule of clan
582 exogamy. But Tallensi, as we shall see later,[1] tend to marry into nearby
591 clans rather than into distant clans. A woman of clan A marries into the adjacent clan B; her daughters marry into the next clans C and D; their daughters marry into clans E and F; and so the process goes on. The result is, firstly, that with the passage of the generations the uterine line becomes more and more dispersed; and secondly, that any person's genealogically nearest uterine kin are also, generally, his spatially nearest uterine kin. In practice, it is these near *saarət* whom he knows and knows of; it is they who are concerned in witchcraft accusations or *tyuk* guilt. His more distant *saarət*—distant in both the genealogical sense and in residence—are often unknown to him. The main reason for this is that uterine kinship remains effective only through personal contact. The children of sisters know one another because their mothers have kept in touch, visited one another, and often helped one another all their lives. Similarly, the uterine grandchildren of sisters know one another, if they live near one another, because their mothers have kept in touch, though not so faithfully as true siblings. Often these contacts are maintained into the fourth generation of a woman's uterine descendants; rarely beyond the fourth generation; and a person does not, as a rule, know all his or her *saarət* whose link with him or her is a common great-grandmother. Some of them will, as likely as not, be Gərisi or Namnam and he will not even know of their existence.

602 In principle, however, uterine kinship is never extinguished, and it often happens that people of different clans, who are strangers to one
[769] another, discover by chance that they are distant *saarət*. Supposing, for instance, a man proposes to make an important sacrifice to a lineage ancestor. His agnatic co-descendants of this ancestor are bound to be present; but he will also send to tell the cognatic descendants through women of that ancestor and some of them will come. Two men of different clans may be present who now discover, for the first time, that they are cognatically related through the lineage of their host. They trace out their genealogical connexion (*tumh dɔŋam*) and find that they are distant *saarət*. I have seen this happen more than once, and the delight of the men concerned was a vivid testimony to the meaning

[1] Cf. Ch. XI.

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over. Such reciprocal gifts pass between kinsmen of all categories. But the giving is specially generous and cordial between *soog* kin.

In keeping with the unrestricted range of cognatic kinship among the Tallensi, the close ties of kinship between male *saarət* are extended to their children and sometimes to their grandchildren. With men whose fathers were *saarət*, whether they belong to the same clan or not, the formal ties of kinship are often mellowed by the affection and trust of a friendship like that of their fathers. This is rarer with grandsons of male *saarət*, but not unknown. I have seen a man break down with grief over the death of a clansman who was his father's *soog*'s son. He would have felt no sense of personal loss at all if this extra bond had not existed between him and his dead clansman. Again, there was Tiezien of Kpata'ar's lifelong friendship with his father's *soog*'s son at Zuarungu—a friendship which would not normally have arisen between a Talɔŋ and a Gɔrɔŋ living eight miles apart.

A link of uterine kinship is often used to define the relations of individuals who are not themselves directly related by kinship. A typical case that shows how far the classificatory principle can be pressed, if there is a *soog* link in the chain of relationships connecting two people, is the following. Zaawɔmya of Bunkiuk began courting the young widow of a Wakii man. But in the course of making inquiries he discovered that the girl's late husband's father's mother and his own mother had been distant *saarət*. Zaawɔmya concluded, therefore, that the girl's late husband's father would have stood to him in the relationship of an 'older brother' (*bier*), since he would have called the latter's mother his 'mother' (*ma*). Hence the girl's husband would have been his 'son' (*bii*) and the girl herself his 'daughter-in-law' (*sampɔya*). 'Well just think of it', he said to me, when he told me the story, 'how can a man marry his daughter-in-law? So I gave it up.' When Mansami, Ɔmara's own father's brother's son ran away with the wife of Ɔmara's father's *soog*'s son at Dkoog, there was a bitter quarrel between them. Ɔmara accused Mansami of disgracing his (Ɔmara's) kinship ties and ordered him either to give up the girl or leave the homestead. Mansami, obstinately insisting that he and the girl's husband were not related, made this the pretext for keeping her and went off to stay with his mother's brother. Such roundabout connexions through a *soog* link are often exploited for ulterior motives. A common trick of fathers who object to a daughter's marrying a particular man is to allege a remote kinship tie of this sort between the girl and her suitor. The latter and his family head may be sceptical of the alleged evidence for this but they can do nothing about it.

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581 595 622 or headman or important elder, backed as it often is by lavish gifts to her parents, security of the bride-price, and the attraction of his wealth and power or status. Few parents would hesitate to force their daughter to accept such an offer. Chiefs and headmen do in fact have an excessive number of wives. The five biggest chiefs and headmen of the Tongo district had between them about 160 wives of all ages in 1936. Their predecessors of a generation ago would have had perhaps 30 between them, at the utmost. The extra 130 wives they have means that probably 100 other men have been cheated of wives. This has no doubt diminished the chances of early marriage for a proportion of young men, but not so greatly as the men assert. All the evidence of Tale domestic institutions and of Tale genealogies goes to show that wives were always highly prized because they were always at a premium.[1] In consequence, no unmarried girl or woman of child-bearing age lacks suitors, and no wife of child-bearing age need endure an intolerable marriage. She can always find another husband. That women take advantage of their scarcity value is what one would expect; but they do so to a smaller extent than one anticipates. This is due partly to the strength and stability of the patrilineal lineage system, expressed in inter-personal relations in the power of the *patria potestas*, and partly to the great value women set upon wifehood and motherhood. Life is a failure to a Tale woman who never becomes a wife and mother.

The Stability of Marriage

586 587 582 In consequence, partly, of the scarcity value of wives, but more, no doubt, of the conflict of loyalties and interests which has to be overcome, marriage tends to be unstable in the initial stages. A young man rarely settles down permanently with his first bride, and young women generally treat their first marriage as an experiment unless the husband is a much older man to whom they have been married by formal negotiation. In the course of collecting census material I noted the marriages of over a hundred men. There is not one man over the age of 30, approximately (excluding a few physically or psychologically abnormal men), who has failed to experience one or more unsuccessful and usually short-lived marriages. Most men of 30 to 40 can give a history of five

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[1] I have no demographic evidence suggesting that there was formerly or is now a marked deficiency of marriageable women as compared with men in Taleland. My own crude demographic inquiries suggest a sex ratio of about unity among the Tallensi. Polygynous marriage, therefore, inevitably means competition for wives, even though women are usually married by the age of 16 or 17, as near as one can guess, and men rarely succeed in finding a wife before the age of about 25. The natives maintain that the age of marriage for girls has been decreasing rapidly since the coming of the white man (cf. my paper, 'A Note on Fertility among the Tallensi of the Gold Coast', *Sociological Review*, xxv, 1943. 3–4).

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or six abortive—or rather, to translate the native attitude into our own terms, experimental—marriages. Men of over 50 say, with a laugh, that they cannot remember all the women they have married who left them after a short time. Women are more discreet about their marital history; but observation leads to the conclusion that between 50 and 60 per cent. of all married women have had more than one husband.[1]

A marriage breaks up either through the action of one of the spouses, generally the woman, or through that of the wife's guardian. The Tallensi have no formal procedure for divorce. If a man wishes to get rid of a wife (which happens very seldom) he generally does so by withholding the bride-price, so that her guardian eventually recalls her, or he makes her life so uncomfortable that she deserts him. If a woman decides to leave a husband, she simply absconds. She may do so because she dislikes him, or because he does not feed her well enough, or neglects her sexually or otherwise, or, natives say, out of mere caprice. All women, according to the men, are fickle and gullible; a plausible suitor can seduce any woman. So if a young wife goes to visit her parents and stays longer than two or three days, her husband, be he an ardent young man or a sober greybeard, hurries off to fetch her, usually in considerable dudgeon, for fear that she may be abducted by another man.

Despite these initial pitfalls of marriage, families do get established and remain stable. Though the idea of marriage as a lifelong and irrevocable bond does not exist among the Tallensi, many couples do settle down for life, and many other couples remain united for a long enough stretch of years to produce one or more children.

Many complicated circumstances have an influence on this. Naturally, the jural formalities must be properly complied with. That is to say,

[1] Many of these experimental marriages are not marriages at all, according to the strict letter of custom, since they are sometimes dissolved before placation gifts have been made and often before any instalment of the bride-price has been paid. Some last only a few weeks. But they are always called marriages; for it is a fact that many marriages that begin in exactly this way do turn out to be stable in the end. Counting as 'wives' only those for whom bride-price was paid and who bore children to their husbands, I found, among a randomly chosen group of 20 men over 45, approximately, that only 2 had had 1 wife each; only 3 had had 2 wives each; the remaining 15 (= 75 per cent.) had all had more than 2 wives each. Altogether, these 20 men had had 71 wives (average 3·5 wives each); they had lost 21 (average 1 each) by death; and at the time of the census they had 45 wives (average 2·25 each). But most of them claimed to have 'married' from 10 to 20 times and were able to give a fairly complete history of these abortive 'marriages'.

Among a randomly chosen group of 20 women of child-bearing age—who were therefore not yet at the end of their matrimonial careers—6 (= 30 per cent.) had had only one husband each; 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had only 2 husbands each; the remaining 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had more than 2 husbands each, 4 of them having had more than 3 husbands each. Apart from the propensity to choose a final husband by trial and error, the custom of the levirate helps to increase the number of husbands a woman may have in her lifetime.

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581 the bridegroom's guardian must send the placation gift (*lu sendaan*)
583 to the bride's guardian, and must pay a proportion of the bride-price
[586] acceptable to the latter. A wife is usually espoused (*sol*) by paying the bride-price of four head of cattle or their equivalent in instalments over a number of years. If he does not fulfil these jural requirements, a man has no rights to and over his wife. On the other hand, women frequently desert husbands who have paid a part or, occasionally, even the whole bride-price. In such a case an honourable man may feel bound to compel his daughter to return to her husband, but if the girl refuses obstinately he may have to yield to her. Often, however, a father prefers his daughter to find another husband from whom he claims the bride-price that has to be refunded to the first husband. And it is not uncommon for men to instigate a daughter to leave her lawful husband for another man, or to take a daughter away from her husband and give her to another man as a means of raising what we should call ready cash or its equivalent—for instance, a cow to repay a pressing debt, or to buy grain for the household. Thus, observance of the jural proprieties gives a husband a weapon with which he can try to assert his rights to and over his wife. It does not give him an absolute guarantee of these rights nor does it ensure the stability of the marriage.

582 A girl's parents, and especially her father, can make or mar a marriage.
593 Young people may wed without their fathers' consent, but they cannot remain legitimately married without it. If a man objects to a son-in-law he usually succeeds in exercising his right to take his daughter away, though cases are numerous in which the woman has persistently returned to the rejected husband, who has had to be accepted in the end. By contrast, if a father has himself chosen or likes his daughter's husband, he is a strong ally. He can force the girl, beating her if necessary, to stay with her husband, though here again fathers have been known to fail with obdurate daughters. Generally, however, the strength of
[789] paternal authority makes a father's command irresistible; for he might curse an intractable daughter, and this is greatly dreaded.

583 Again, a woman will not stay with a husband who does not pay at
691 least a portion of the bride-price. It is an insult to her, placing her on the level of a casual lover and exposing her to the taunts of her co-wives of the lineage. Pukiehət's wife was taken from him five times because he could not pay anything towards her bride-price; every time she came back. At length her guardian brought a case against Pukiehət. The chief put it to her that Pukiehət was, in effect, treating both her and her guardian with contempt. Sadly she admitted this and agreed to leave him if he did not meet the debt at once. Pukiehət saw he was in danger of losing his wife. He was a poor man; but he set to work energetically and managed to raise the equivalent of two cows, which was enough to satisfy his father-in-law.

586 Even a fruitful marriage, the strongest of all bonds between husband

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members of two mutually exclusive corporate groups. That is why the lineages of husband and wife are implicated in the marriage and have a lasting interest in its course and in the offspring that come from it. Tale speech and etiquette reveal this, and the classificatory extension of affinal kinship depends on this. Thus if your friend's son or daughter has recently married, you do not ask him 'Whom did he (she) marry?', but 'Where (i.e. which clan) did he (she) marry?', and 'A child of whose house (i.e. what segment of the clan) did he (she) marry?'. We shall take up this thread again at a later stage of our analysis. At present we are concerned with the consequences for the relations of husband and wife of their divergent lineage ties.

The tension due to these opposing sets of social ties appears most acutely in the early stages of marriage, obviously as a result of the fact that marriage is an alliance between two genealogically independent corporate units with rival interests in the protagonists. Every marriage in which the husband is a young man begins as a struggle, carried on with many wiles, stratagems, pretexts, and even threats of or recourse to force. Firstly, the suitor has to compete with other young men whom his would-be bride and in-laws often play off astutely against him. The largest part of his courtship consists in winning over the girl's parents with frequent presents and soft words. To elope with her he must buy the secret connivance of her mother or brother, for her father will always stand out for a negotiated marriage. This is not only an acknowledgement of the father's right to dispose of his daughter's hand, but a guarantee of the consent of the bridegroom's guardian and lineage elders and hence of the payment of the bride-price on demand. It is a defeat for the bridegroom, who has to bow to the will of his father-in-law.

The real struggle begins, however, only after a man succeeds in carrying off his bride by elopement. If the elders on both sides tacitly accept the match as a good one, it becomes a matter of mere formality; but all the conventions of the jural transactions necessary to make a legitimate marriage are couched in the idiom of a struggle between hostile groups. That is why they must take place through an intermediary, the *pɔyasama*, a clansman of the bridegroom and a cognatic kinsman of the bride, bound to hold an even balance between the two parties by reason of his kinship with both.[1] But often enough the struggle turns into a genuine and sometimes acrimonious battle for the girl which may go on for weeks or months. It is then that the lack of a constituted legal system in Tale political organization makes itself felt. The girl's father resorts to all sorts of devices to coerce her abductors. He may use ritual pretexts, exploit ties of cognatic kinship with the abductors' lineage or clan, even, in extremity, threaten to kill himself on their doorstep, or, in the old days, to stir up war against their clan. I have been present at several violent altercations between a party of men

[1] Cf. pp. 317–18 below.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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of this is clearest in funeral customs. If Paanbɔbis II, Kutɔbis's brother, were to die, Ɔndieso would take part in all the rites prohibited to men whose fathers are still alive. He would not refrain out of respect for Kutɔbis. 613

But in matters which involve Ziŋgan biis as a segment of Bɔɣayiedɔt yiri, Ɔndieso acknowledges Kutɔbis as his 'father'. Thus when Bontuya, who belonged to one of the other four inner lineages of Bɔɣayiedɔt biis, died, Ɔndieso went to the funeral as one of the representatives of Ziŋgan biis. He then refused to take part in the rites tabooed to men who have fathers alive, saying that if he did it would be an insult to Kutɔbis.

Ziŋgan biis also appear as a unit in reckoning prohibited degrees of kinship for purposes of marriage. As we have mentioned before, the inner lineage is the widest corporate group that is a jural unit in marriage. A distant 'sister's son' (*ahɔŋ*) of Kutɔbis would not be allowed to marry a daughter of Ɔndieso. And this criterion applies also to the inheritance of widows. If Kutɔbis were to die, Ɔndieso could not seek any of his widows in marriage, because they are his classificatory 'mothers'. On the other hand, he could do so if Kutɔbis were his classificatory 'brother' or 'grandfather'. He can court the widow of any member of any of the four other inner lineages of Bɔɣayiedɔt yiri since generation differences are not recognized beyond the boundaries of Ziŋgan yiri. 613 582

In spite of the ambiguities lurking in his relationship to Kutɔbis, the predominant affective tone it has for Ɔndieso is that he is a 'son' and will remain a 'child' (*bii*) in public affairs that involve the whole clan as long as Kutɔbis or any of his brothers is alive. Until they are dead there will always be a living if shadowy representative of paternal authority standing between Ɔndieso and his remote ancestors—and that means between him and the world at large, as it impinges on him through the corporate activities of the whole clan. This influences Ɔndieso's attitude to life considerably. He feels that he has not yet reached full social maturity, though he is much more intelligent and better informed than many of the clan elders. One sees and feels this vividly enough in one's intercourse with the natives, but it is not easy to pin down. It came out, for instance, in Ɔndieso's behaviour whenever he accompanied me to the Chief's court. He always took a back seat then, as befits a 'youngster'. It came out also in his attitude to Kutɔbis whom he despised for his uncouth ways and all-round incompetence, but yet deferred to with the modicum of respect that is correct in one's relations with a 'father'. 613 554

A man who can say 'I no longer have any fathers' associates himself with the elders, the *kpɔm*, in thought and action even if he is younger in years than some men whom he calls 'sons'. He thinks of himself as a 'father', in particular in relation to the ancestors, as one who has the duty of watching over the welfare of others. It is most marked among 613 622 554

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602 577 rites of setting up a shrine dedicated to her. For safety's sake all the travelling on such journeys was always done at night. During the day the traveller lay low in a kinsman's house. So Teroog set off one night. He went first to his father's mother's brother's home at Gorogo. Thence he was escorted to his father's mother's mother's natal home at Sii. The Sii people took him to a more remote kinsman at Balung and from there he was conducted, by similar stages, to Sandema. His return journey was made in the same way. The whole trip took nearly a month. The same journey can be done on foot, nowadays, in three or four days each way.

Similarly Zubiuŋ men relate how in the old days their Tongo neighbours, being of a different and unconnected clan,[1] used sometimes to raid their livestock to recover bride-price debts. As the people of Tongo were much more numerous than those of Zubiuŋ resistance was generally impossible. But if a Zubiuŋ man had a close matrilateral or affinal kinsman at Tongo, this afforded him some protection. His kinsman would intercede to get any livestock of his that had been seized restored to him, or, if the debtor were a very close agnate of his, to arrange a settlement between creditor and debtor. Often the head of an intercalary lineage, such as Nəŋsuur yidem,[2] undertook this on behalf of his classificatory mother's brother's lineage.

602 782 Nowadays the most important obligations extra-lineage kin have towards one another are in ritual matters, and these are unavoidable obligations. This applies especially to kin of a senior generation in relation to those of a junior generation. A person owes ritual allegiance to his matrilateral ancestors as well as to his paternal ancestors. In fact, in the strictly personal affairs of the individual, his matrilateral ancestors have as decisive a role in his life as his patrilineal ancestors. This accords with the recognition given to maternal origin in the social structure and with the rule that kinship never dies out. Hence there are many occasions in the life of a man when he has to go to his mother's brother or to someone standing in that order of relationship to him to ask him to sacrifice on his behalf. For it must be remembered that the canon of agnatic descent prohibits anyone other than a true patrilineal descendant from sacrificing to an ancestor or ancestress. Thus if a man wants to sacrifice to his mother's spirit guardian he has to go to her natal home and ask her father (or his heir) to perform the sacrifice. Herein lies the force of the statement commonly used to define extra-clan kinship ties, 'I sacrifice on his behalf', or 'he sacrifices on my behalf'. The whole weight of the ancestor cult stands behind these and other ritual obligations of extra-clan kin to one another and no Talən would violate them.

602 582 If we add to this the rule that marriage between extra-clan kin of any degree is forbidden, we can see that there is much in common between

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. vi.
[2] Cf. ibid., pp. 59 and 78.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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the basic rules of inter-personal sentiment and conduct for extra-clan kin and for members of one clan or lineage. As in the lineage, so among extra-clan kin, the pattern of sentiment and conduct we have sketched has greater force with close than with distant kin. The differences between kinship within the lineage and kinship outside the lineage lie less in the sphere of individual sentiment and conduct than in the different structural implications of the two kinds of social ties.

The Classificatory Extension of Extra-clan Kinship

At the outset of this chapter we referred to the classificatory extension of extra-clan kinship ties. This requires further elucidation. In the early stages of my field-work this aspect of Tale kinship seemed to me extraordinarily confused. The natives seemed to label any extra-clan kinsman a 'mother's brother (*ahəb*)' or 'sister's child (*ahəŋ*)' quite indiscriminately. The only distinction they appeared to make was in terms of generation differences. A person was apparently labelled a 'sister's son' if he was related to the speaker through any ancestress who was a member of the latter's clan, and he was described as a 'mother's brother' if the woman forming the link was the speaker's mother or ancestress and a member of the other person's clan.

This apparent confusion soon resolves itself into an orderly picture if the three principles in accordance with which kinsfolk are identified with one another are applied. In addition we must take into account the socio-spatial distribution of these kinship ties, and, especially, the time dimension without which no aspect of Tale social structure can be understood. Naturally the natives themselves do not consciously use such general conceptions in sorting out their kinship bonds; to them it is simply a question of spontaneous adjustment within the everlasting stream of social relations.

The most important of these factors is the lineage principle. An indication of this is found in the constant reference made by natives to their mother's brother's lineage (*ahəb yiri*) or maternal grandfather's lineage (*yaab yiri*). If a native is asked about his matrilateral kin the first thing he mentions is his *ahəb yiri*—the clan and perhaps clan segment of his mother's brother. The interpretation given to the concept *yiri* varies according to the situation, and follows the rules that govern its usage within the clan or lineage. For instance, I went to Tenzugu one day accompanied by two Tongo men. When we reached Kpata'ar one of them said 'This is my *ahəb yiri*', and explained that his mother was a Kpata'ar woman (*pɔŋayabəlɔg*). A little later he stopped and broke off a couple of heads of ripe millet in a farm through which the path wound. I twitted him with stealing other people's crops. 'No', he replied, 'this is my *ahəb yiri*. This is La'ab's farm and I am an *ahəŋ* of his *dug*. They won't object to my taking a few heads of millet.' Thus

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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members of his inner lineage, at what he called the deliberate flouting of his rights as *biiraan*, owner of the child. A long squabble between the two lineages followed which eventually petered out in a compromise. This may seem a storm in a teacup; it was taken very seriously by a dozen Tale elders.

The outstanding example of the retention of patrilineal rights is found in the case of a girl who grows up at her *ahəb yiri*. Whatever her personal relations with her father's lineage may be, it is they who receive the placation gifts and the bride-price when she marries. The *ahəb*'s share is only the 'cow of rearing'.

Cases of girls living as foster children at their *ahəb yiri* up to marriageable age are uncommon. I knew of only one girl who was living with her *ahəb* and would probably not be taken back by her father's people before she reached marriageable age. A girl living with her mother's brother is usually there because she was sent to her maternal grandmother in early childhood owing to the death of her mother. She may be left there until she is 11 or 12, but she is then generally fetched by her father's people. A boy has more freedom. He cannot be forced to return to his paternal home if he does not wish to do so.

An interesting reflection of the conventional ideas on the relations of an *ahəb* and his foster *ahəŋ* is found in the story commonly told of how certain politico-ritual offices came to be transferred from one clan to another. The tale is so stereotyped that it can be regarded as a standard myth. It is alleged of several of the lesser chiefships that they were originally vested in different clans from those that now hold them—usually clans that are closely related to the present holders by local or ritual ties. The last chief of the original line, the myth relates, had his sister's son, a member of the clan now holding the chiefship, living with him. The chief put great trust in his *ahəŋ*; and, either because he had no sons or because his sons were indifferent to politico-ritual affairs, the chief always delegated his *ahəŋ* to represent him. Thus, he used to send the *ahəŋ* as his messenger whenever he had to communicate with the senior chief who was the elector to that chiefship. In this way the *ahəŋ* became known to the elector. When his *ahəb* died he hastened stealthily to the elector with the news, taking lavish gifts along with him. Knowing him so well from their previous contacts and persuaded by the rich gifts he brought, the elector thereupon immediately conferred the chiefship on him. Thus the chiefship came into the possession of its present holders. A similar story is told to explain the dominant position of the lineage of Lakum yiri in the politico-ritual structure of Ba'ari, in spite of their being an attached lineage.[1]

When it is pointed out that such actions are contrary to custom and would not be allowed at present, the natives have two answers. Firstly, they say, unscrupulous people never hesitate to break a customary rule

[1] *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 88.

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

into its social space. The most important of these is, universally, its mother or some one who acts as mother. Finally, there will be culturally defined ways of encouraging and stimulating or restraining a child in these efforts.

In Taleland these factors of social behaviour are notably inter-correlated. In general there is a marked parallelism between the trend of physiological and psychological development and that of social and cultural development—unlike our own society in certain strata of which social development lags behind psycho-physical development. A girl of 16 or so in Taleland is not only physiologically mature but has accepted the role of a mature woman in the psychological and social sense. She is married, she has economic duties to perform, she is socially responsible. A boy of the same age is pulling his full weight in the economic system, and it is regarded as entirely reasonable that he should be thinking of marriage and sex life, though it may be four or five years before he finds a wife. It should be added that physiological development among the Tallensi is probably somewhat slower than among ourselves. Accurate age norms could not, as will readily be appreciated, be established, but I have estimated that the average age of walking is about 2 years, of talking about 3 years (though single words like *mma*, my mother, and names of members of the family are used with infantile approximation at about 2 years). As far as one can judge by somatic indications, pubescence in boys commences at about 14 years. Girls, according to my wife's observations, do not as a rule menstruate before the age of about 15–16 years, by which time they have frequently been married for a year or two.

This close correlation between psycho-physical and social development is reflected in the notion held by the natives that physiological growth is a natural process, like the growth of plants and animals. The Tallensi have no elaborate transition rites to mark the passage from one stage of growth to another. Unlike many other West African peoples, they accept the onset of puberty in boys and girls, which they recognize by special terms, with the same casual rationality as they accept the cycle of time itself. Health and well-being of the body must be safeguarded with all the resources of their empirical and magical knowledge, but growth in itself is not a matter of cultural emphasis. It is of the very nature of human life. It emanates from